1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
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PREFACE

THE present volume is the tenth published report of the Papuan Government on anthropology. It was also accepted and approved by the University of Adelaide as thesis for the Honours degree of M.A.

The aim of the book is primarily ethnographical. Interpretations of native customs have been essayed only in passing, and no attempt has been made to criticize them from the practical view-point. A Government anthropologist, however, must make some show of being a practical one. If those who have dealings with the Orokaiva—perhaps those also who have dealings with other native peoples—are helped by reading these pages to know their men better, then even pure description is not devoid of practical usefulness. Anthropology, if not necessarily a full-time job, is at least a slow business; and the magistrate, amid a multitude of distractions, cannot always find time for it. But knowledge of native custom is admittedly essential to good government; and books of this kind, in so far as they do something to supply this knowledge, can fairly lay claim to a practical value.

The information presented here was got together during two sojourns in the Northern Division, the first from September 1923 to February 1924, the second from July 1924 to March 1925—a total of about fourteen months. During these two periods I visited most parts of the Orokaiva country. For various reasons I concentrated mainly on the central Aigā tribe, and secondarily on the Binandele and Wasida. But all the other tribes were visited for shorter periods, and as the result of a general survey I found it possible to embrace the whole people in one ethnographic account.

Although the various tribes speak dialects of one and the same language, there are considerable differences between them, and I never gained a fluent speaking knowledge of any one of them. Several very good English-speaking inter-

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INTRODUCTION

114 THERE has been a great change of late years in the attitude of the civilized world towards what are known as the native races. We find sympathy where we used at the best to find indifference, and a regard for native custom, which threatens at times to become exaggerated, but which is a welcome change from the undisguised contempt which prevailed not so long ago.

One of the results of the change has been an increase in the number of books that are published upon the manners and customs of primitive folk. And especially has this been the case with regard to Papua; anthropologists, missionaries, government officers and others have vied with one another in the production of books on Papua, so that the *terra incognita* of the last generation must now be one of the best known dependencies of the Empire.

Most of the books on Papua are good—some are even first class—but I think that this work of Mr. Williams should be the most successful of all, by reason of the great variety of readers to which it will make appeal. The professional anthropologist may revel to his heart's content among the details which Mr. Williams supplies of the domestic and social organization of the Orokaiva, and the most eager student of what used to be called 'Realien' should be more than satisfied with the information given him on the construction of houses, canoes, and other articles, and with the precise description of the parts of each, and of the names applied to every one of them. Such particularity and precision may deter the general reader, but let him take my advice and persevere, and he will find his reward in much intensely interesting information concerning the daily life of these strange and rather attractive people, and especially in the anecdotes and the personal experiences of the writer which are scattered through the book.

Thus it may be that the Chapters on 'Arts of Life' and 'Individual, Family, and Clan' will appeal only to the scientific

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114 investigator, but it is certain that those on 'Marriage', 'Warfare', 'Initiation Ceremonies', 'Dance and Drama', and 'Medicine and Magic' will be full of interest even to those whose scientific equipment is as meagre as my own. To some, Chapters VIII and XV on 'The Plant Emblem', *Heratu*, and the 'Spiritual Substitute', *Asisi*, will be the most interesting of all, for they give a good illustration of the almost insurmountable difficulty there is in getting any real knowledge of these people—a difficulty which is commensurate to their apparent difficulty in forming an appreciation of ourselves. All who have had any experience of native administration must have found how very difficult it is to establish any real contact with the native mind; and how very dangerous those people are who have persuaded themselves that they 'have a thorough knowledge of the native'.

Very interesting as an instance of the great gulf which seems to be fixed between the primitive and ourselves is Mr. Williams's account of the untranslatable *Meb*—a feeling of shame, humiliation, and contrition, which we, of the superior white race, are mercifully spared. The Orokaiva who has been wronged is naturally very sorry for himself, but, according to Mr. Williams, he also 'wants others to be sorry for him, and particularly the man who has wronged him. His attitude is not so much "I'll make you sorry for what you have done" as "I'll make you sorry for me". Accordingly we find a person under a sense of wrong going to extraordinary lengths of self castigation, from merely fasting or running away from home for a while, to delivering himself up to an enemy tribe or hanging himself from a tree.' And Mr. Williams gives a case that he knew where a dozen water melons were hacked to pieces by the owner because one had been stolen, in order to create a feeling of *Meb* in the man who had stolen it. With us the thief would regard the destruction of the other dozen with complete indifference; but with the Orokaiva he would be overwhelmed with shame and remorse. All this is to us as difficult to understand as the Japanese custom by which the creditor puts an obstinate debtor to confusion by committing *hari kari* on his doorstep, but it is probable that some similar motive accounts for

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many Papuan suicides. Suicide is not uncommon in Papua; it is generally connected with a love affair, and is perhaps often prompted by a desire to create some such feeling as *Meh* in a faithless lover or a successful rival.

Mr. Williams fortunately combines the scientific spirit with exceptional literary gifts. Probably no one could make the enumeration of the component parts of a canoe particularly exciting to a reader who is not a trained anthropologist—is not the Catalogue of Ships itself a rather tedious episode?—but Mr. Williams can give those very dry bones at least a semblance of life, and even the most unpromising passages are illumined by a variety of interesting and appropriate stories, as that of the giant woman *Bobokoia*, as big as an island, who rescued the children from the flooded lake, and the treacherous 'crocodile man' who volunteered to buoy up one side of the raft. These two stories are of course native legends, but Mr. Williams makes a skilful use of actual happenings in order to elucidate the points which he is discussing. For instance the reference to Mr. Flint's account of the man who could not fell a tree for fear of cutting his baby's throat, and of the interpreter who, by washing his clothes, caused the death of his child, illustrate an association of ideas hardly comprehensibe to us except by direct instances.

Other interesting stories are those of the *Aiga* natives who mistook the miners' boys for women, of the boastful Handaupa, and of the practice of assuming the name of the man whom you have killed. It is, I believe, the custom not only of the Orokaiva but also of the Western Papuan, as far as Dutch New Guinea, to collect the names of slaughtered foemen, and to distribute them among the children of himself and his friends. A very famous warrior on the Mambare, renowned throughout the Territory for various more or less mythical feats, was always known as *Busimai*, and I think there are very few who ever suspected that this was not his real name; but he told me some years ago that it was not—it was the name of a man whom he had killed on the *Opi* River.

Mr. Williams mentions some other curious resemblances

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between the customs of the Orokaiva and those of the Gulf of Papua and the West. He is careful to avoid any definite expression of opinion upon a possible common origin, but on the principle that 'fools rush in', I may venture to suggest that some such connexion is quite possible, for, so far as I understand these matters, Dr. Haddon's theory that the culture of the *Purari* Delta came from the North, across the main Range, from the former German New Guinea, is now generally accepted. There is a further coincidence of custom, which I think is not mentioned by Mr. Williams, in the prohibition against eating the man that one has killed oneself. This custom exists both among the Orokaiva and in the Purari Delta, subject in the latter case to one strange exception which I have mentioned elsewhere.[1]

Incidentally Mr. Williams has done good work in refuting the idea that the native lives a life of idleness and makes his wife do all the work, and in exposing the fallacy that the native is a child and not a man—a false analogy which seems to be generally accepted almost as a matter of course. Mr. Williams points out that a native is a man with the same groundwork of passions as an European; and it is a neglect of this very obvious fact that is responsible for much of the trouble that has arisen between white women, in various parts of the world, and their native servants.

It will be seen, from what I have said, that this book offers a many-sided attraction, but to an administrator the most interesting part is the last chapter. For in that chapter Mr. Williams deals with a phenomenon which has always appeared to me to be very difficult to understand, though it is common enough in Papua, and that is the well-ordered regulation of a peaceful society with apparently no government and no administration of justice to support it. There are no chiefs with any authority worth talking about among the Orokaiva, and the same is true of nearly the whole of Papua, and there are no Courts and no recognized method of enforcing native law or custom, and yet within the community, within what Mr. Williams calls the 'sympathy group', life is probably as peaceful and as orderly as it is

[1] See *Papers on British New Guinea*, p. 180.

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with us. How this result can be obtained in the absence of any objective sanction is one of the puzzles of native administration. 114

Various explanations have been given of this phenomenon, most of them very ingenious, but none of them, to my mind, at all convincing, though I think it may be fairly said of Mr. Williams's effort that it is the most promising and the most reasonable of them all. The practical administrator can perhaps afford to leave the problem unsolved, for it seems clear enough that, whatever the explanation of the mystery may be, it can offer nothing upon which one can work or build upon as a foundation. Sorcery is mentioned by Mr. Williams, and has been mentioned by others, as a deterrent to law-breakers, and doubtless the fear of sorcery is at least as effective as the fear of physical violence or anything else, but we are surely not justified in assuming that sorcery is used only against evil-doers, and that the dread of it is confined to them. In any case the most ardent advocate of indirect rule could not approve of an administration of justice founded upon sorcery, and sorcery, 'the most hated of crimes' as Mr. Williams calls it, is, in fact, the chief cause of disorder in the villages of Papua even to this day.

The practical administrator may therefore leave the problem unsolved, but every one interested in the government of native races should read this last chapter, for it contains many suggestions of interest and value. In what the Orokaiva call *Meb* the Papuan has developed a feeling which is foreign to the ordinary European; it will be strange if we discover that he has also developed a sense of civic duty which enables him to secure tranquillity and good government without all our administrative and judicial paraphernalia.

J. H. P. MURRAY
Lieut.-Governor.

PORT MORESBY,
19 *Sept.* 1929.

2: Williams E, G-5 (1923-1925) 1928
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PREFACE

THE three parts of this book were presented as Anthropological Reports Nos. 6, 7, and 8 to the Papuan Government. The first two are meant in some part to be essays in applied anthropology. It will be understood, however, that although they are official reports and receive the *imprimatur* of the Government they do not necessarily represent Government opinion. The third can hardly profess to be practical except in so far as it may help to interpret a difficult phase of native mentality.

It will be seen that this last, while mainly theoretical, is not in any great degree original. But I will not venture to claim any authority for such theoretical indiscretions as may appear in a somewhat hastily written essay.

F. E. W.

2: Williams E, G-5 (1923-1925) 1928
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FOREWORD

I AM proud to have been asked to associate myself with the researches of an old pupil in whose common sense and accurate powers of observation I have complete trust. At the same time the value of anything I might have to say in a brief preface such as this is not clear to me; unless indeed this effort is to be regarded simply as a piece of magic. Now Mr. Williams is, I gather, inclined to include in his very definition of magic the fact of its being 'obviously futile'. Obvious, however, as this essential futility may be to the outsider, it is not, I presume, perceptible to the perpetrator of the magic; who on the contrary must hope and believe that, by letting off his blank cartridge, he will somehow register a moral bull's-eye. My good wishes, then, for whatever they may be worth, are hereby magically projected into this little book; and the success which, I am perfectly sure, must attend its appearance will undoubtedly be treated by me as in some measure a matter of personal congratulation. After all, there can be no more grateful illusion than that of claiming credit for the excellence of a pupil's work.

What I like especially about Mr. Williams's treatment is that throughout it hits a happy mean between too much and too little sympathy with the native point of view; and thus suggests a line of policy which the more enlightened type of administrator—and it is common knowledge that he flourishes in New Guinea—might well consent to follow. The business of a government ethnologist is with theory in the first instance, yet with

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114 the sort of theory that will directly subserve practice. In short, it is at bottom a theory of education that he is there to supply—one that of course in such a case has an ethnic application, involving as it does the conversion of a whole people from their traditional ways to another set of habits assumed by their instructors to be better for them in the long run no less than for every one else. Now a theory of education of this kind must be neither soft-hearted nor unduly harsh. Our civilization cannot afford to play the part of the doting aunt who would let the dear child alone to wallow as it pleases in its primal condition of impish innocence. On the other hand, a rod in pickle is no meet symbol of benevolent empire. In its capacity of protector of aborigines, the administration must save the native from himself no less than from inopportune interference, whether well-meaning or not, on the part of the white man. Given the inevitable fact that contact between widely different grades of culture has come about and is bound to go on, a certain indulgence tempered with firmness offers the only means of reconciling stone-age humanity to its new lot.

Mr. Williams, then, so far as I can judge from a distance, most helpfully draws attention to the psychological nature of the problem confronting those who are genuinely for giving these primitive folk a chance of self-realization along fresh lines. Even in that part of his book which might seem primarily to be concerned with economics, the need is emphasized of meeting age-long custom half-way. Magic's twin-sister taboo amounts to little more than the presentiment of deadly peril attending breach of custom in any and every

2: Williams E, G-5 (1923-1925) 1928
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direction. However tempting on grounds of obvious utility the suggested change may be made to appear, the primeval conscience protests; and in moral evolution reason can never have the better of conscience except by humouring it. Primitive conservatism, in short, is a force that must be respected as constituting the moral fibre of the old-fashioned type of man and as integral to his very will to live. Nevertheless, as Mr. Williams amply demonstrates in these pages, mankind never stands still; but, socially no less than in a physiological way, is subject to a perpetual metabolism. Life consists in movement even in the most backward community; and the administrator must be on his guard lest he construe such movement as unrest, whenever he has had no part in exciting it, but has to deal with it as a spontaneous manifestation of the native genius. An instance in point is the strange *Vailala* cult that within the last ten years has swept through the Orokaiva with the violence of a contagion. The authorities might well describe it as a 'madness'. Yet they are well advised to have taken no drastic measures to suppress it, preferring to allow time for a scientific diagnosis to be made before remedial action, if indeed any be required, is taken. With the unfortunate precedent of Pontius Pilate before their eyes, governments should be chary of applying police-methods to new movements in religion, even when the chief priests and pharisees would have them force the issue. Speaking generally and without special reference to a situation which can only be understood on the spot, I welcome such an outburst of moral energy—moral from their own point of view at any rate—as a healthy sign of vitality in a people only too ready to

2: Williams E, G-5 (1923-1925) 1928
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114 succumb altogether to *taedium vitae* under those conditions of more work and less play—including spear-play—which our rule inevitably imposes upon them. In short, why not let those aboriginal quakers quake and shake to their hearts' content? For the rest, every anthropologist will rejoice in a picture of primitive religion taken from the life and, moreover, taken at that psychological moment when, in defiance of inveterate tradition, that creative impulse which is man's prerogative bodies forth fresh symbols whereby to express the love of life in all its variety and fullness.

3: Reay E-4, 5 (1951) 1953 OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

SOCIAL CONTROL AMONGST THE OROKAIVA

By MARIE REAY

Introduction

"Orokaiva" is a general term denoting people speaking Binandele and related dialects who occupy a large part of the Northern Division of Papua. Orokaiva society was investigated in some detail in the 1920's by the late Dr. F. E. Williams, Government Anthropologist. This article is based upon data furnished in Dr. Williams' published work,[1] supplemented by observations recorded by the author during a brief field period early in 1951 which was interrupted by the eruption of Mt. Lamington. My own observations refer to the Wasida or Jegase Sarahu tribe,[2] whereas some of Dr. Williams' information was gathered from the Aiga, Binandele and Tain Daware tribes, which are situated in other parts of the Division but nevertheless reveal a social organization practically identical with that of the Wasida people.

In investigating social control amongst the Orokaiva, three aspects will be examined which would seem to be important in any empirical study of social control. Firstly, there are the ideals people expect one another to try to live up to: the Orokaiva use the convenient term *otohu* to refer to these. Secondly, it is necessary to study education in conformity, which involves a consideration of Orokaiva childhood and an examination of the ritual of initiation from this point of view. Thirdly, there are the actual sanctions operating to encourage conformity with Orokaiva ideals. There will be an attempt, finally, to assess the effectiveness of this system.

(1) OROKAIVA IDEALS

The Orokaiva term *otohu* is perhaps midway between behaviour which is normally expected and that which is ideally desirable. This term is used in two senses: adjectivally, it indicates that the person so described is well-behaved in certain definite ways and, secondly, it signifies an honorific ornament worn by a large number of people. A man is *otohu* if he is generous and helpful, and is diligent in gardening and hunting[3]; also, the *otohu* man does not quarrel or brawl, he does not steal, nor does he commit adultery. A woman is *otohu* if she listens to her husband and does not speak to him angrily, if she is faithful to him and accompanies him wherever

[1] F. E. Williams, "Plant-Emblems Among the Orokaiva," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. LV, 1925; *Orokaiva Magic* (1928); *Orokaiva Society* (1930).

[2] Called the Jegasa-Saraa tribe by E. W. P. Chinnery and W. N. Beaver (*Papuan Annual Report* for 1914–15, pp. 158 ff.).

[3] *I.e.*, if he is able to vary the diet of his household occasionally with food from the bush, and if he works his garden regularly.

4: Chinnery & Haddon E-5 (ca. 1915)1917
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II.

A. C. HADDON.

The following article was written a year before receiving Mr Chinnery's communication. I think it advisable to let both papers appear together, as they throw light upon each other.

The natives of the Kumusi, and more especially of the Mambare Divisions, must be in an excited condition, for the new cults noted by Mr Chinnery do not seem to be related with the somewhat earlier cult to which I call attention, nor is there any evidence of the slightest connection between these and the abortive message of the Milne Bay "prophet." It is interesting to observe that M. Moszkowski[1] records a Messiah belief among the coast tribes of the Mamberamo, a river that opens by Cape D'Urville, in Netherlands New Guinea, at the eastern limit of Geelvink Bay. He says that there is everywhere met with amongst the coastal tribes a belief in Manseren Korēri, an ancient culture hero, and that the belief is certainly older than the first appearance of the missionaries. Very long ago there lived, according to this belief, a man endowed with supernatural and divine powers. He gave the Papuans laws and regulations, and founded the men's ceremonial houses. But, because the Papuans gradually neglected his commands, one day he vanished. Yet, so the legend runs, he will eventually return, and then everything will be renewed. Therefore is he called Manseren Korēri, the god at whose return everything will cast its skin.

An awakening of religious activity is a frequent characteristic of periods of social unrest. The weakening or disruption of the older social order may stimulate new and often bizarre ideals, and these may give rise to religious movements that strive to sanction social or political aspirations. Communities that feel themselves oppressed anticipate the emergence of a hero who will restore their prosperity and prestige. And when the people are imbued with religious fervour the expected hero will be regarded as a Messiah. Phenomena of this kind are well known in history, and are not unknown at the present day among peoples in all stages of civilisation.[2]

It is significant that even among the savages of New

[1] *Zeitsch. f. Ethnol.*, xliii., 1911, p. 327.

[2] The Ghost Dances of the Indians of the Plains of N. America, which partake of a Messianic character, may serve as an example.